

**INTER ARMA: BEING
ESSAYS WRITTEN
IN TIME OF WAR**

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Inter Arma: Being Essays Written in Time of War by Edmund Gosse

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EDMUND GOSSE

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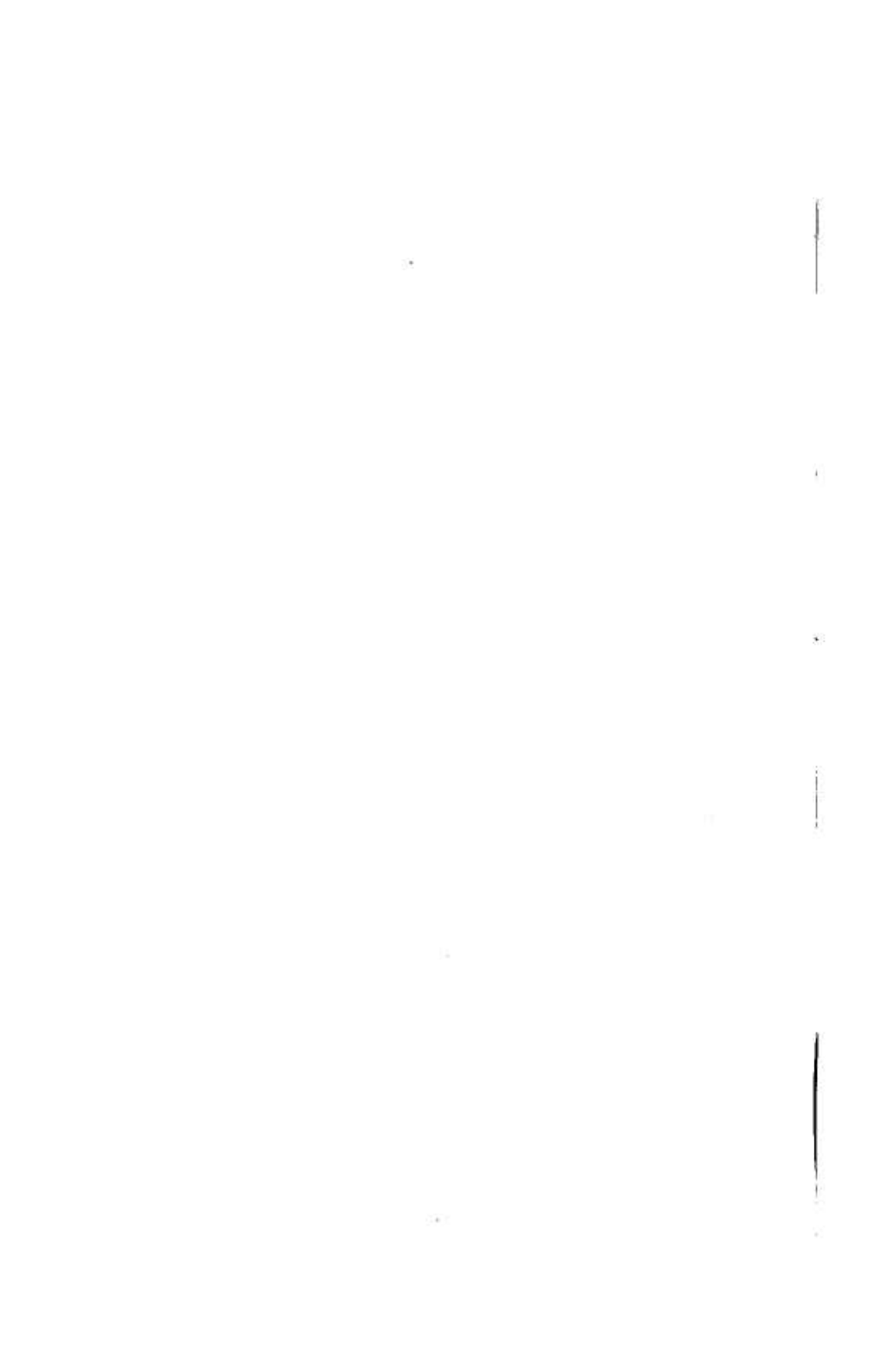
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INTER ARMA

**BEING ESSAYS
WRITTEN IN TIME OF WAR**

**BY
EDMUND GOSSE, C.B.
OFFICIER DE LA LÉGION D'HONNEUR**

**NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1916**

TO
THEIR EARLIEST READER
HAROLD COX
THESE ESSAYS ARE CORDIALLY
INSCRIBED



I have to express my best thanks to Messrs. Longmans, the publishers of the *Edinburgh Review*, for their courteous permission to reprint these Essays, all of which have appeared in the pages of that periodical.

E. G.

PREFACE

It is probable that when the terrific storm, which is now blowing through almost every country of the world, has subsided, and when we experience the full results of a cataclysm so unparalleled, the movement of the European mind during the war may become a subject of philosophic curiosity. On August 1, 1914, we were wakened out of an opiate dream of prosperity and peace, a dream in which the images of life recurred as on a kind of zoetrope, with a lulling uniformity of repetition. So it was, so it had been, so it would ever be, the only possible change being that everybody must grow richer, that life must become more luxurious, and that the orb of moral and intellectual experience must wheel ever more and more hugely around a secure and radiant society. And then, with a stage suddenness, Berlin unmasked itself, and the self-sufficiency of Europe was shattered.

Between our old sleepy quietude and the inconceivable and immeasurable novelties which await the world when all this chaos is harmonised again there lies a period of storm, a sort of belt or stratum, dividing the life we knew from the life which we cannot yet so much as conjecture. At first, many of us thought that literature would hold no part in this sphere of tempest, that in

1914

company with the arts and sciences it would withdraw from public view, and reappear only on the wings of peace. But as a matter of fact it has been with us, patently, from the first, and is now present more than ever. Only it has changed its aspect and its character; it has largely modified its range of subjects. But the habit of writing, of expressing emotion in letterpress, has reached a point in the history of mankind at which we may expect almost any other form of action to recede before it. We have discovered in the course of the present crisis that the first thing people want to do is to fight, and to prepare for fighting, but that the next thing is to write and to arrange for writing to be printed.

The character of what has been written since the war began has differed in proportion with the differences of temperament in the men and women who have written it. But I think we may notice one element of uniformity. No one has been able to speak, at all events no one has succeeded in being listened to, who has not in some direction or another been intensely affected by the vast sequence of events in the course of the war.

This has been no time for piping lullabies out of the top windows of the ivory tower. It is noticeable that a thrill of personal excitement in the author is necessary if he is now to reach an audience at all. Even those who think themselves justified in setting their own academic prejudices and mechanical opinions against the great unity of the nation's purpose, even these men, whose action is irritating to us, exact our attention because they are excited. The war affects them violently,